

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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P 061130Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3912

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 2039

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E.O. 11652 : GDS

TAGS : PFOR, MASS, MARR, BA

FOR ATHERTON FROM AMBASSADOR

SUBJECT : SURVEY TEAM REPORT AND MIDEASTFOR

REF: MANAMA 2022

1. BREVITY OF SURVEY TEAM'S STAY IN BAHRAIN WAS SOURCE OF CONCERN TO ME, THOUGH TEAM LEADER AND TEAM MEMBERS ASSURED ME THAT THROUGH EXCELLENT COOPERATION OF BDF STAFF, AND TEAM'S OWN OVERTIME EFFORTS, TEAM LEARNED ENOUGH TO BE ABLE TO WRITE A GOOD REPORT. NEVERTHELESS, I REMAIN CONCERNED THAT TEAM'S IDEA OF "GOOD REPORT" MAY NOT BE EQUAL TO THE COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY REPORT WHICH WAS OFFERED SHAIKH HAMAD BY DEPSECDEF CLEMENTS. SHAIKH HAMAD'S EXPECTATION THAT REPORT WILL BE OF SUFFICIENT BREADTH OF SUBJECT MATTER, AND OF DEPTH OF DETAIL, TO PROVIDE BDF WITH WORKABLE "FIVE YEAR PLAN" IS NOT UNREASONABLE IN LIGHT OF LANGUAGE USED BY CLEMENTS AND MEMBERS OF HIS PARTY IN DESCRIBING AND OFFERING SURVEY.

2. I WOULD HOPE THAT DEPT WILL BE IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH TEAM AS IT DRAFTS REPORT, THOUGH I SUSPECT TEAM MAY TRY TO EXCLUDE DEPT'S REP FROM ACTUAL DRAFTING. ALSO, YOU MAY WISH TO HAVE DEC 20 DRAFTING DEADLINE EXTENDED IN ORDER TO ASSURE AN ACCEPTABLE

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OUTCOME. SHAIKH HAMAD TOLD ME HE WOULD RATHER HAVE NO REPORT

AT ALL THAN ONE WHICH IS EITHER SUPERFICIAL OR TOO OBVIOUSLY
BASED ON "POLITICAL" RATHER THAN PURELY MILITARY JUDGEMENTS.

3. SENSE OF URGENCY ABOUT TIMING OF REPORT WHICH SHAIKH HAMAD
EXPRESSED DURING CONVERSATION REPORTED REFTEL COULD REFLECT
PRESSURE ON HIM BY PRIME MINISTER TO "PRODUCE SOMETHING FROM
AMERICANS" QUICKLY IN ORDER TO GIVE PRIME MINISTER LEVERAGE IN
CABINET ON MIDEASTFOR EXTENSION. THIS IS PURE SPECULATION OF
COURSE AND THE OPPOSITE MIGHT BE TRUE: THAT SHAIKH HAMAD WANTS
SURVEY REPORT QUICKLY IN ORDER TO HAVE AT LEAST SOMETHING IN
HAND FOR HIS EFFORTS BEFORE GOB TURNS US DOWN ON EXTENSION
REQUEST. FORMER EXPLANATION HAS AT LEAST SOME LOGIC BEHIND IT
IN THAT IT WOULD NOT BE SURPRISING IF PRIME MINISTER HAD DECIDED
THAT WE WILL BE KEPT DANGLING ON MIDEASTFOR UNTIL HE AND
SHAIKH HAMAD HAVE FIRM IDEA OF WHAT WE WILL DO FOR BDF.
ONLY EVIDENCE THAT LATTER EXPLANATION MIGHT BE VALID IS SINGLE,
NOT VERY PRECISE, AND PARHAPS FACETIOUS, REMARK BY SHAIKH HAMAD
TO ADMIRAL CROWE AND TEAM LEADER TO EFFECT THAT BAHRAIN WILL
MAINTAIN ITS CONTACTS WITH AMERICAN MILITARY "AFTER MIDEASTFOR
GOES" BY BUYING AMERICAN EQUIPMENT.

4. I BELIEVE MIDEASTFOR EXTENSION AND SURVEY REPORT ARE NOW
LINKED IN "AFTER YOU ALPHONSE" FASHION: WE WANT TO KNOW ABOUT
THE NAVY BEFORE DISCUSSING ANY US ROLE IN BDF EXPANSION AND
BAHRAINIS WANT THE OPPOSITE. KEY TO BREAKING THIS IMPASSE
COULD BE SHAIKH HAMAD'S REQUESTS FOR ENGINEERS TO DO BASE SITE
SURVEYS AND FOR US ASSISTANCE IN MAINTAINING BDF PILOTS'
FLIGHT PROFICIENCY. THOUGH MIDEASTFOR BALL NOW IN PRIME MINISTER'S
COURT -- I WILL GO BACK TO HIM SOON FOR THE PROMISED "QUICK
DECISION" -- WE STILL MAY HAVE TO COME UP WITH SOMETHING
CONCRETE IN ORDER TO GET EXTENSION AND POSITIVE RESPONSES, AT
LEAST IN PRINCIPLE, TO SHAIKH HAMAD'S TWO REQUESTS MIGHT DO
THE TRICK. I WILL DEVELOP THIS IDEA FURTHER IN A FUTURE
MESSAGE, ASSUMING THE ISSUE WILL NOT BE SETTLED BY PRIME MINISTER'S
ANSWER TO ME, BUT I WANTED YOU TO KNOW NOW OF MY PRELIMINARY
THOUGHTS AND, SINCE TEAM IS NOW DRAFTING, OF MY CONCERNS
ABOUT THE SURVEY REPORT ITSELF.
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